

MARINE INFORMATION**DISCONTINUANCE OF 121.5 AND 243 MHZ FOR SATELLITE DISTRESS ALERTS**

The Cospas-Sarsat Program has announced plans to terminate satellite processing of distress signals from 121.5 and 243 MHz emergency beacons. No effective date has been set for this action, however, it is expected to occur far enough into the future to avoid a crisis for mariners, aviators and other users of the system. Users of the system will have to switch to emergency beacons operating at 406 MHz, which are more reliable and provide search and rescue agencies complete information that they need to do their job, in order to be detected by satellites.

Reasons for the Cospas-Sarsat program to discontinue use is driven by guidance from the International Maritime Organization (IMO) and the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO). These two agencies are responsible for regulating the safety of ships and aircraft on international transits and handle international standards for maritime and aeronautical search and rescue missions. In addition, 121.5 MHz false alerts inundate search and rescue resources which impact the effectiveness of lifesaving services.

Individuals who plan on buying a new distress beacon need to be aware and take the Cospas-Sarsat decision into account. For further information contact United States Coast Guard Headquarters at: Phone (202) 267-1586 or email: **psteward@comdt.uscg.mil**

NIMA MARINE NAVIGATION DEPARTMENT YEAR 2000 CONTINGENCY OPERATIONS

The Marine Navigation Department of the National Imagery and Mapping Agency has successfully conducted Year 2000 rollover tests on all production, maintenance and dissemination systems for marine safety information. All systems have been certified to be Y2K compliant and we anticipate no interruption in our service and operations. Customers should experience no disruption of any data via the Marine Navigation Department website and Navigation Information Network (NAVINFONET) Bulletin Board Service.

Contingency measures have been taken to ensure immediate response, service and access to vital maritime safety information in the unlikely event of a Y2K related problem affecting production and/or delivery schedules. Staffing will be on-site throughout the rollover weekend to ensure that all systems remain operational. Customers can contact NIMA concerning hydrographic products and services at 1-800-362-6289 (1-800-362-NAVY).

All navigation publications scheduled to be printed in December 1999 were sent to our printing contractors early to allow completion by 31 December 1999. In the event of a Y2K problem external to NIMA affecting printing and dissemination of products after 01 January 2000, customers are reminded that marine safety information will continue to be available via the Marine Navigation Department website and NAVINFONET. The website can be found via the NIMA Homepage (**www.nima.mil**) under the Maps & Geodata icon or directly at **<http://pollux.nss.nima.mil>**. Customers may also correspond directly with the Marine Navigation Department via e-mail addressed to **navsafety@nima.mil**, to the WorldWide Navigational Warning Service Broadcast Watch Desk PLA of "NIMA NAVSAFETY BETHESDA MD", or by using the telephone and fax numbers found listed in the inside front cover of each weekly U.S. Notice to Mariners.